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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT
FRIDAY, MARCH 24, 2006

In Today's Papers

US Senate Delegation Meets Turkish PM, MPs in Ankara
Hurriyet, Milliyet, Sabah, Aksam, Cumhuriyet, Radikal,
Zaman, Yeni Safak and others:
A six-member US Senate delegation headed by John Warner,
Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, met with
the Turkish Parliamentary Defense Committee on Thursday.
Senator Warner told Turkish lawmakers that Turkey was an
important partner for the US, particularly in the fight
against terrorism. US senators said they shared Turkey's
concerns about the PKK presence in northern Iraq. They
stressed the US will not allow a civil war in Iraq but will
continue to work for democracy in the country. Several
papers report Warner as expressing appreciation for Turkey's
support in efforts to establish a new government in Iraq.
Some dailies claim Turks criticized the senators for US
"mistakes" in Iraq. Cengiz Kaptanoglu, the Chairman of
Parliamentary National Defense Committee, underlined the
importance of relations with the US, a "friend and ally."
"We have not forgotten the US support for Turkey's EU
membership claim as well as in the fight against terrorism
and the opening of new energy corridors," Kaptanoglu said,
and added: "We should have confidence in Turkey-US ties.
Turkey and the US have common views and goals regarding
regional and global matters." Turkish lawmakers also
suggested establishing the Turkish model in Iraq and
Afghanistan.

Responding to press questions after meeting with Prime
Minister Erdogan later in the day, Senator Warner said
Turkish support was crucial in forming a new Iraqi
administration representing all groups in the country.
"There is no civil war in Iraq now," Warner said, "but this
does not mean that there will not be one in the future."
During his meeting with the US delegation, Erdogan said

Turkey would continue to support efforts to ensure a smooth Iraqi political process. Erdogan also told US senators that Turkey would continue to urge Iran to cooperate with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the international community regarding its nuclear program.

General Pace Visits Ankara

Hurriyet, Milliyet, Sabah, Vatan, Cumhuriyet, Radikal, Zaman, Yeni Safak and others:

In a meeting with the Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff Peter Pace on Thursday, Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan expressed Turkish concerns about the situation in Kirkuk and the PKK activities in Iraq. Erdogan outlined for Pace Turkey's "5 sensitivities" on Iraq - the need to protect Iraq's unity; natural resources must be shared by all; no favoring of one group over the others; need for special status for Kirkuk; need for changes to the constitution. Erdogan also urged Pace to stop the infiltration of PKK terrorists into Turkey from northern Iraq. General Pace said that the US was willing to cooperate with Turkey in the fight against international terrorism, noting that he had come to exchange views with Turkish leadership for better cooperation between the Turkish and US militaries. Later in the day, Pace attended a reception marking the opening of the international symposium, "Global Terrorism and International Cooperation" organized by the Turkish General Staff (TGS). Afghan President Karzai and the chiefs of staff of Sweden, Bulgaria, Georgia and Lithuania also participated in the conference. Pace told the press that he had discussed the PKK issue in detail with Erdogan. General Pace said struggling against the PKK was important, but that stability in Iraq had to be established first. In an interview with the all-news broadcaster NTV this morning,

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Pace said that he had not made any "requests from Turkey" about possible military action against Iran, and stressed that the US is focused on diplomatic efforts.

Drawing attention to the importance of the "Global Terrorism" symposium which General Pace attended, columnist of conservative Turkiye, Yilmaz Oztuna emphasized that the US wants NATO to be more involved in the global fight against terrorism. In his column, Oztuna noted: "When General Ozkok emphasized that terrorism is a huge disaster, he was referring to PKK terrorism as well as the terrorism against which the US is conducting a global fight. Currently the US is exerting efforts to involve NATO in the fight against global terrorism which Turkey also supports."

Poll: Majority of Turks Oppose US Military Action against Iran

Radikal, Cumhuriyet, Zaman and others: A public opinion survey conducted by the International Strategic Research Organization of 2500 Turks in Ankara, Istanbul, Izmir, Bursa and Adana shows that 45 percent oppose Iran's nuclear program while 46 percent support it. 95 percent disapprove of a US military strike against Iran and Syria. 52 percent want an immediate US pullout from Iraq while 22 percent want a gradual withdrawal in at least a year. 59 of those polled believe there is no difference between the former Saddam Hussein regime and US conduct in Iraq. 80 percent think the US want the oil in Iraq, and 71 percent believe the US is trying to spark civil war in the country.

Turkey to Restore Churches, Synagogues

Hurriyet reports Turkish General Directorate for Foundations has decided to repair the churches and synagogues of minority foundations for the first time in the last 82 years. Turkish Armenian Patriarch Mesrob II welcomed the development, saying the decision to restore the churches was unprecedented in the history of the Turkish Republic. There are seven churches and synagogues on the official list of historical monuments slated for restoration this year.

TV Highlights
NTV (7 a.m.)

Domestic News

- The Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Peter Pace, will address the international symposium on "Global Terrorism and International Cooperation" on Friday. The Chief of the Turkish General Staff, General Hilmi Ozkok, will deliver the closing speech.

- Defense Minister Vecdi Gonul will fly to Los Angeles on Friday to deliver a speech on "Evolving Security Environment and Turkey's Strategic Role in Eurasia" at a meeting held by the Los Angeles World Affairs Council.

- Accompanied by State Ministers Besir Atalay and Mehmet Aydin, Prime Minister Erdogan will travel to Sudan to attend the 18th Arab League Summit on March 28-29.

- Private TV and radio broadcasts in the Kurdish language kicked off yesterday in the southeastern provinces of Diyarbakir and Sanliurfa. Local broadcasters complained about the 45-minute daily restriction for the Kurdish language programs.

- Thousands of scientists and astronomy fans are expected in Turkey on March 29 to watch a four-minute total eclipse of the sun.

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International News

- In Washington for talks, Greek Foreign Minister Dora Bakoyannis will criticize Turkish National Security Council document branding territorial water disagreements between Turkey and Greece as a cause for war. DAS Daniel Fried told Greek journalists that the Turkish declaration should not be seen as sign of hostility, adding that Washington would not recognize Turkish Cyprus.

- EU Enlargement Commissioner Olli Rehn said he expected Turkey to be ready for EU membership within 10 to 15 years.

- A Briton and two Canadians held hostage in Iraq for almost four months have been freed.

Economy News

- At a meeting with Prime Minister Erdogan on Friday, the head of Turkish Exporters Assembly (TIM), Oguz Satici, and representatives of 22 sectors will ask the government to solve their problems related to high energy and labor costs and low foreign currency rates.

- The Turkish Central Bank has made no changes in short-term interest rates in the third meeting of its monetary board this year.

- Turkey Statistics Institute said half of the national income is unregistered.

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<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/ankara/>

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